

Remarks

Claims 8-14 and 16-20 have been canceled. Withdrawal of the objections and rejections of claims 8-14 and 16-20 is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-7, and 15 were rejected under §112, second paragraph. Claim 1 has been amended and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claim 1 was rejected as anticipated by SEAT et al. 2006/004593. Claim 1 has been amended and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested. Support for the amendment is found, for example, in Figures 2 and 4-5 of the application as filed.

SEAT et al. do not disclose a fluid transfer duct that includes a central buoyancy tank, a frame attached to the tank carrying a number of flow lines and a power supply cable, where an anchor line connects the central buoyancy tank to the sea bed, and where the power supply cable extends along the flow lines and is supported at least partly by the frame. The frame is not shown or discussed in the reference and there is no basis for one of skill in the art to learn of the frame, or supporting a power supply cable on this frame, from the reference. The reference discloses flow lines that rest on the seabed and does not disclose where power cables would be located or how they would be supported.

Further, SEAT et al. do not disclose the claimed fluid transfer duct in combination with taut tendons attaching the

second vessel to the seabed. Indeed, seabed supported cables and lines exert significant forces on the second vessels in SEAT et al. as is evident from their large size and anchoring via catenary anchor legs. If such seabed supported cables and lines were used with the taut tendons claimed herein, the stability of the second vessels would be negatively affected. The applicant has solved this problem by supporting the cables and lines on the buoyant mid-water fluid duct. There is no suggestion in SEAT et al. that the present invention is the solution to this problem. SEAT et al. provide no incentive to combine the seabed supported oil and gas lines and power cable into a mid-water buoyant unit and to replace catenary anchor lines with taut tendons.

Accordingly, claim 1 avoids the rejection under \$102.

Claims 1, 3, and 7 were rejected as unpatentable over POLLACK 5,542,783 in view of SALUSBURY-HUGHES 4,753,185, and claims 4-6 were rejected further in view of WITTGENTSTEIN 3,173,271. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The Official Action acknowledges that POLLACK does not disclose the power supply cable of claim 1 and relies on SALUSBURY-HUGHES for the suggestion to modify POLLACK to include this cable. However, SALUSBURY-HUGHES also does not disclose the claimed power cable. The Official Action points to column 4, lines 1-15 of SALUSBURY-HUGHES, but this refers to power distribution on the vessel 20; there is no hint that power is to be sent via cable to another vessel. Power is generated onboard

the vessel 20 and is distributed onboard the same vessel. There is no suggestion to send this power to another vessel or to do so in a power cable that is located and supported as claimed in amended claim 1.

Further, POLLACK discloses a service vessel 14 and implies that this is the source of power since no power cables of any kind are disclosed. That is, the proposed combination would include the service vessel that supplies power, instead of power cables, which in any event are not disclosed in SALUSBURY-HUGHES either.

Accordingly, the claims avoid this rejection under §103.

In view of the present amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is believed that the present application has been placed in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG & THOMPSON

/Thomas W. Perkins /

Thomas W. Perkins, Reg. No. 33,027
209 Madison Street, Suite 500
Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone (703) 521-2297
Telefax (703) 685-0573
(703) 979-4709

TWP/jr